

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 209 237

SP 019 110

AUTHOR King, Edith W.; Milan, Marjorie  
TITLE Identifying Promising Practices in Teaching  
Ethnically Diverse Children in the Elementary  
School.  
PUB DATE 81  
NOTE 34p.  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS \*Classroom Environment; \*Classroom Techniques;  
Elementary Education; Ethnic Groups; Ethnic  
Relations; Immigrants; \*Multicultural Education; Non  
English Speaking; \*Refugees; Teacher Effectiveness;  
\*Teaching Models; \*Teaching Styles

## ABSTRACT

A study was made of techniques used by teachers of children from widely diverse ethnic backgrounds. Thirty-two classrooms with children from ages four to eight years were observed and the teachers were interviewed. Most of the children were non-English speaking Vietnamese, Hmong (Laos), and Mexican Americans. Observers assessed the broad areas of classroom organization, social interactions in the classroom, rules and routines, cultural continuity in the classroom, and innovative strategies used by the teacher. Few innovative strategies were observed. Classrooms, for the most part, were conducted much as any other kindergarten through second grade classrooms. From the observations, a profile was drawn of the type of teacher who would be most effective in an ethnically diverse classroom. This model teacher individualizes the entire curriculum for each child and interacts in a positive and supportive manner with each. Much praise and encouragement characterizes this teaching style. The classroom decorations reflect the ethnic background and heritage of all the children, and the teacher refers to aspects of the childrens' culture during learning activities. This teacher maintains close contact with parents, and attempts to learn a few words of the languages the children speak. The classroom of the model teacher is arranged so that children work face to face, and children are not stereotyped by ethnic or racial identity or academic ability. Of the teachers observed in this study, at least seven displayed all or nearly all of these characteristics and behaviors. The Multicultural Classroom Checklist used for observation is included in the report as well as a copy of the questionnaire used in the interviews. (JD)

\*\*\*\*\*  
\* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made \*  
\* from the original document. \*  
\*\*\*\*\*

ED209237

IDENTIFYING PROMISING PRACTICES IN TEACHING  
ETHNICALLY DIVERSE CHILDREN IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as  
received from the person or organization  
originating it  
Minor changes have been made to improve  
reproduction quality

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS  
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

EDITH W. KING

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES  
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)"

by: Edith W. King  
Professor of Educational Sociology  
University of Denver

Marjorie Milan  
Early Childhood Education Coordinator  
Denver Public Schools

© No portion of this paper may be duplicated without permission. Copyright pending, 1981.

SP 019 110

Identifying Promising Practices in Teaching  
Ethnically Diverse Children in the Elementary School<sup>1</sup>

Introduction

The research project "Identifying Promising Practices in Teaching Ethnically Diverse Children in the Elementary School" was funded by Western Interstate Consortium on Higher Education (WICHE) Ethnic Intern Program of Boulder, Colorado, the Denver Public Schools and the University of Denver, School of Education in Spring, 1991. The effort was under the direction of Dr. Edith King, Professor of Educational Sociology, School of Education, University of Denver. The WICHE Ethnic Studies Intern Program designated Marjorie Milan, Early Childhood Education Coordinator at Colfax and Swansea Schools, Denver, as the intern to assist in this research. The Director of Research for the Denver Public Schools, Barry Beal, lent his expertise in the design of the research project. Cooperation and consultation was provided by Walter Oliver, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education, and principals of the seven elementary schools of the Denver School District participating in the research.

Background of the Study: The National Scene

In the major cities of the United States today and in smaller cities and towns, as well, new waves of immigrants from the far corners of the globe, from lands and cultures little known to Americans, have come to take up permanent residence. These new waves of immigrant families from Vietnam, Laos, and other areas of the Far East, Middle East, and South Africa are fleeing their native countries owing to political and social upheavals.

<sup>1</sup>The authors wish to acknowledge the valuable suggestions of Robert L. Crain, Center for Social Organization of Schools, Johns Hopkins University, to the reporting of this research.

America again has become "the promised land," the land of freedom from persecution and terror. Suddenly, many American elementary and secondary schools are filled with children speaking no English, but rather speaking the languages of the many new immigrant groups -- Farsi, Urdu, Hindi, Arabic, Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, Khmer, Korean and other languages unfamiliar to our teachers.

These children are new Americans and by exploring their cultural perspectives we are creating the link between their ethnic heritage and the adjustments and changes they will make in becoming acculturated to their new country, their new ethnic heritage -- America. Teachers working with children and their parents from differing backgrounds and heritages need to be able to view events and situations from differing perspectives.

The implications of the Supreme Court's 1974 Lau vs. Nichols decision, creating the now-famous Lau categories, are having a decided impact on children in schools across the country. The landmark decision states that service and treatment in education are not equal merely because all students are provided with the same facilities, books, teachers and curriculum. The Supreme Court's pronouncement points out that "students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education". Now every school district in the nation has to respond to the situation of multilingual and multicultural school populations or be in non-compliance with the law.

We cannot expect teachers to learn to speak all the languages of the children they are dealing with or will come to deal with. But we can give teachers crosscultural techniques and strategies to use in their teaching of children with widely differing ethnic and cultural heritages. Helping teachers to view the world from the others' vantage points will greatly

enhance their effectiveness with all children. When teaching it is essential that teachers be sensitive and aware of the differing interpretations that children from diverse cultures hold. Further, these "differences" which are often regarded as a problem can be turned into a resource as teachers learn to integrate the ethnic heritages represented in the classroom into a platform for studying varying cultural perspectives within America's pluralistic tradition.

#### The Situation in Denver

In the past twelve years since the start of mandatory bussing in Denver beginning in 1969, the school system has lost over 33,000 pupils. Further, the school system is on the verge of becoming a "minority institution", as the Rocky Mountain News' article of May 12, 1981, characterized the school enrollment of Black, Hispanic and Asian children in relation to Anglos in the Denver Public Schools. Like many large cities in the United States, Denver is caught up in the bind of desegregation and bussing, the arrival of new waves of immigrant populations, shrinking school enrollments and white flight to the suburbs. Denver teachers and their administrators have experienced rapid and startling changes in the educational setting that have confused and confounded them.

In those integrated schools where new immigrant populations have swelled the enrollment, teachers have been confronted with working with three particularly diverse ethnic groups in growing numbers. These three groups are the Hmong of Southeast Asia, newly arrived Mexicans from across the border, and Vietnamese of the "boat people" migration of a few years ago. Denver also is host to a wide range of new immigrants from all parts of the globe but the number of these children in schools remain few and isolated compared to the three groups listed above.

The Hmong or the mountain people of Laos are the most unusual and little-

known of the new immigrants. This folk culture had no written alphabet for their language until their arrival in the United States. Existing on a "burn and slash" agricultural economy on the mountain slopes of Laos, they lived in virtual isolation for years until the recent upheavals in Indo-China brought them into an alliance with America and a genocidal position with the Communist governments of the region. Escape to the United States was their only salvation. But life in modern, technologized society has proved harrowing for these primitive, but hard-working people.

New waves of immigrants from Mexico have been flowing into Denver for the past several years representing a different Hispanic group of people than the general stereotype of the Mexican Americans of Colorado and the Southwest. Like the immigrants from Europe many decades ago, these Spanish speaking families are eager to succeed in their new country, urge their children to study hard and achieve in school and are deeply concerned about the academic achievement of their children. Although these new Mexican immigrants are usually working class people, limited in their professional or highly-skilled training, their desire to acquire the American ethos of upward mobility is evident..

Vietnamese families in Denver are not as numerous as other of the "boat people" settlements found in the large United States cities, but they do represent a recognizable and unique group of students in the Denver schools. Generally, high achievers and well behaved, docile students, teachers seem to enjoy teaching Vietnamese children, often remarking about their amazing artistic skills and proficiency in math. This wide range of ethnically diverse pupils in many of the Denver schools have posed a serious problem for teachers used to teaching a majority of English-speaking Anglo pupils with some Blacks or Hispanic interspersed.

### Specific Procedures

Selection of classrooms with ethnically diverse children ages four to eight years (grades Early Childhood through second) from seven different Denver Public Schools was the initial step in the research. This choice of age level was made by the researchers because of the organization of Denver elementary schools for pairing for bussing. Further extensive literature in the field of child growth and development indicates that the early years of schooling are crucial in the child's intellectual and social development.

The director of the project, Dr. Edith King, made an initial visit to each of the seven elementary schools in the study. An interview was held with the principal of each school to inform and obtain permission for the research project. An interview schedule for each principal was administered by the director of the research study.

This interview schedule assessed such general background information about the elementary schools as: size of school enrollment; number of classrooms available for the study; general socio-economic background of the school, extent of children bussed to the school versus those who walk in; ethnic makeup of the school population. Note: The seven schools in the study were originally chosen by the director of bilingual/multicultural education of the Denver schools for their extensive ethnic diversity. Ethnic groups represented in these schools included: from Southeast Asia -- Vietnamese, Chinese, Thai, Cambodian, Hmong and Lao; from Hispanic backgrounds -- newly arrived Mexican, Puerto Rican, Venezuelan; American Indian, Mexican-American, Afro-American, Arabic, Libyan, Pakistani.

After the initial interview with the principal a schedule of visitations for the researchers was organized. A total of fifty-three classrooms,

(i.e. fifty-three different early elementary school teachers) was identified for this study. The researchers were able to actually observe and therefore include in this study a total of thirty-two classrooms with their teachers.

Three instruments were developed for use in observing and interviewing the classroom teachers involved in the study. They were:

- .... The Multicultural Classroom Checklist for Identifying Promising Practices in Ethnically Diverse Classrooms
- .... The Teacher Assessment of Non-English Speaking Children's Achievement and Progress
- .... An Interview with Teachers of Ethnically Diverse Children

These three instruments were adapted from those developed by Dr. Susan Austin for her dissertation research, "Cultural Dynamics of the Elementary School Classroom: An Ethnographic Approach", Florida State University, 1976.

#### Research Methodology

Each ethnically diverse classroom in the study was observed for one full morning or one full afternoon session. (two to three hours in duration). The observers used the "Multicultural Classroom Checklist" which assessed the broad areas of: 1) Classroom environment including a diagram of the physical arrangements, description of bulletin boards, texts and materials used; 2) social interactions in the classroom; 3) rules and routines of the classroom; 4) cultural continuity in the classroom; 5) innovative strategies used by the teacher for working with ethnically diverse children.

Each teacher was personally interviewed to inquire about such activities as working with parents, personal background, education, travel, and general attitudes about the ethnically diverse class. Each teacher was



asked to fill out an assessment of the non-English speaking children's achievement and progress in his or her classroom. (See attachments for copies of these instruments.) The results from the data gathered with these three instruments were tabulated. Results here are expressed in actual numerical count and percentages.

#### Analysis of the Data

Findings: The Multicultural Classroom Checklist

Methods for Tabulating the Ratings on the Multicultural Classroom Checklist:

Following is the result of the observers ratings for items on four of the five areas of the Multicultural Classroom Checklist:

1) Total classrooms included in the results is N = 30. (Although thirty-two classrooms (teachers) were observed two classrooms had to be omitted from the tabulation of the data for all three instruments used in the study due to exceptional circumstances within those classrooms.)

2) The item "general climate of the classroom in group work" was deleted from the final tabulation due to a wide variety of interpretations this item was given by the three observers using the instrument. For future uses of the Multicultural Classroom Checklist this item needs to be re-written and clarified.

3) In tabulating the results not all items on the Multicultural Classroom Checklist lent themselves to analysis expressed in percentages. Only those items that could be presented in this manner are shown below. Percentages were developed by expressing positive response by the teacher as "yes." Negative response by the teacher is expressed as "No." "Yes" or "No" tabulations are shown first by the actual number by count, followed by a percentage showing the "yes" or positive responses. Responses were categorized "Yes" or "No" by combining the 1's and 2's checked by the

raters and the 3's and 4's checked by the raters for each item where such a scale applied.

Table I

Results of Ratings on the  
Multicultural Classroom Checklist

Area A. The Classroom Environment

Item #2	Bulletin Boards are multicultural vs. traditional	Yes 15	No 15	%-Yes 50%
Item #3	Materials are accessible to children	25	5	83%

Area B. Social Interactions

Item #4	Teacher statements about children are positive	27	3	90%
Item #5	Teacher emphasizes cooperation vs. competition	27	3	90%
Item #6	Teacher's role involves students' responses	21		70%

Area C. Rules and Routines:

Item #9	Are consistent	30	0	100%
Item #10	Are effectively enforced	28	2	93%
Item #11	More alternatives for children are available	18	12	60%
Item #12	Available progress charts are not visible	16	14	53%
Item #13	Children are involved in class planning	9	21	30%

Area D. Cultural Continuity

Item #14	Teacher recognized home cultures of children	18	12	60%
----------	---	----	----	-----

Table II

Individual Teacher Scores on the Multicultural

Classroom Checklist

<u>Teacher Number</u>	<u>No. of Positive or "Yes" Responses Indicated by Raters on Checklist Items: Total Possible = 12</u>
1.	8
2.	9
3.	12
4.	10
5.	9
6.	5
7.	10
8.	8
9.	12
10.	11
11.	9
12.	9
13.	10
14.	4
15.	9
16.	11
17.	8
18.	9
19.	6
20.	11
21.	11
22.	6
23.	9
24.	8
25.	6
26.	9
27.	8
28.	11
29.	6
30.	10

Discussion:

Of the thirty teachers rated; seven either obtained 12 or 11 "yes" on the Checklist items -- a perfect or almost perfect score. (Two teachers received a 12 "yes" score; five teachers received an 11 "yes" score.) Therefore seven teachers or about one fourth of teachers exhibited behavior conducive to fostering a positive classroom climate for working with ethnically diverse

children.

The scores ranged from 12 "yes" responses, to only 4 "yes" responses on the 12 items of the Checklist. Six teachers fell in the 4 to 6 "yes" responses range on the Checklist items or almost one fourth of the teachers exhibited classroom behavior that was not conducive to an optimum learning environment.

The remaining seventeen teachers fell in between with a range of 8 to 10 "yes" responses to the items checked by the raters. So a little over half of the teachers were doing a somewhat adequate job of teaching ethnically diverse children.

Discussion of Items with Observers' Narrative Response:

Area A, Item #1 Draw a diagram of the classroom arrangements.

Consistently, early elementary school classrooms are arranged in the same manner, with kindergarten classrooms being the exception. Kindergarten classrooms are usually larger, have a doll or "wendy" corner and more open space for games and rhythmic activities. However, observers could determine from their diagrams of the thirty-two classrooms that arrangements allowing for small group activities such as listening centers or tables with games, musical activities, math activities, puzzles, etc. afforded children many more alternatives than the traditional pattern of seating with chairs in rows or chairs at tables but still in rows facing front, teacher desk, front and center at a vantage point for monitoring all activities in the classroom. Observers reported no exceptional differences or unique techniques in the arrangements of classrooms in the study. All classrooms could be classified as quite traditional in their physical set-up.

Area B, Item #7 Social Interaction in the Classroom.

"The teacher's style in teaching--moving about the classroom versus

stationary interaction with children.

The observers reported that all the teachers they observed for the two-three hour periods moved about the classroom to interact with their pupils. It is very difficult to imagine a teacher of children ages four to eight years being stationary for more than a short period of time, even ten to fifteen minutes. However, some teachers did manage to hover front and center of their classrooms the greater percentage of the time.<sup>2</sup>

Area E. Innovative Strategies in Teaching Ethnically Diverse Children.

This item was also discussed with the teachers and their principals in the interview carried out by the researchers during the visits to the elementary schools in the study. Therefore, innovative practices in teaching ethnically diverse children will be discussed with the presentation of the results of the Teacher Interview Questionnaire.

Findings: The Teacher Assessment of NES Children's Achievement and Progress

Methods for Tabulating the Ratings of Teachers' Assessments of Non-English Speaking Children's Academic and Behavioral Progress: At the close of the 1980-81 school year teachers of the ethnically diverse classrooms involved in this study identified a total of 118 NES children in their classrooms present for the entire 1980 school year. Most of the children represented three diverse ethnic groups---Hmong, Vietnamese and Mexican (recently arrived from Mexico) as described on page 4. There were children (one each) representing Puerto Rican, Libyan and Cambodian ethnicity from families recently arrived in the United States. The following charts record results from just the three most numerous groups; therefore N = 115.

<sup>2</sup> This item in the Multicultural Classroom Checklist should be changed to "Teacher spends much of the time in a front and center position in the classroom working with the total group of children."

The terms the teachers used to describe the NES children's progress were transcribed for ease of presentation here to:

Functioning at grade level - ("good")  
Not functioning at grade level -- ("poor", "needs improving", etc.)  
Functioning above grade level -- ("excellent")

Teachers of young children responded that they could not comment on NES children's writing skills. Further the researchers realized the instrument had not requested information on math skills. For future investigations this category should be added to this questionnaire.

Results are expressed in numbers; with percentages in parentheses.

Table III

Results of Teachers' Assessments of  
Academic and Behavioral Progress of NES Children

N = 115

<u>Ethnic Group</u>		<u>Not Function- ing at grade level</u>	<u>Functioning at grade level</u>	<u>Functioning above grade level</u>
Hmong N =	Oral Lang.	23 (53%)	17 (40%)	3 (7%)
	Read. Skills	33 (77%)	8 (19%)	2 (4%)
	Emotional			
	Behavior	11 (26%)	8 (42%)	14 (33%)
Mexican N = 44	Oral Lang.	17 (39%)	6 (36%)	11 (25%)
	Read. Skills	19 (43%)	16 (36%)	9 (21%)
	Emotional			
	Behavior	13 (30%)	11 (25%)	20 (45%)
Vietnamese N=28	Oral Lang.	8 (28%)	10 (36%)	10 (36%)
	Read. Skills	9 (32%)	9 (32%)	10 (36%)
	Emotional			
	Behavior	3 (11%)	15 (53%)	10 (36%)



Findings: The Interview with Teachers of Ethnically Diverse Children

Methods for Tabulating the Results:

Since this questionnaire was administered by the researchers as an oral interview with teachers, a wide variety of responses were recorded by the researchers. These responses were transcribed in narrative form. However four of the questions on the Interview With Teachers Questionnaire lent themselves to a numerical tabulation. These are as follows:

"Do you work with parents?" -- 63% responded in the affirmative.

"At what specific level was your training?" -- 93%  
replied at the primary or elementary school level.

"Do you speak a language other than English?" -- 13%  
replied that they did speak another language.

"Do you enjoy contacts with people of other nations and cultures?"  
--76% of the teachers said they did enjoy these contacts.

The questions on this questionnaire inquiring about the general socio-economic make-up of the class, the degree of transiency and the ethnic backgrounds of the children were also asked of the principals. The responses to these questions are described in the records of the interviews with the principals as well.

Finally, responses from all three questionnaires, plus the interviews with the principals were combined to glean an assessment of what was deemed as promising practices in teaching ethnically diverse children.

The following is a list of what was suggested:

- work with a bilingual tutor or aide daily or send children to the ESL teacher daily.
- use of peers to practice skills
- mainstream children immediately upon arrival in school
- hold an attitude that they are "just nice little people"
- respect their right to privacy
- lavish praise on accomplishments
- individualize

use aides of same culture to work with children  
promote and create displays of ethnic and cultural artifacts  
respect learning styles  
make a slide now for introduction of the school in various  
languages to show to new children  
put NES children in a separate group in the beginning  
leave children alone if they do not want to participate  
need for much pupil-teacher interaction  
interpreters should go to the home  
divide reading groups into levels  
ESL programs in the school  
children correct their own work daily for feedback  
cook and serve ethnic foods  
use techniques like the "Magic Circle" or AWARE program to  
develop class and school rapport

### Conclusions and Comments

#### Some General Observations

As the list of "innovative or promising practices" for working with ethnically diverse children indicates, elementary school teachers and principals had few new or unique practices to suggest for working with the children. Concurrently, the researchers, observing the classrooms in the study, were hard-pressed to find techniques or strategies they could identify as innovative. It was generally apparent to the researchers that:

.....umbrellas in April and flowers in May were more often displayed on bulletin boards and borders than representations of differing racial and ethnic heritages;

.....highly structured and traditionally organized classrooms characterized the majority of classrooms observed;

.....if alternatives were available for the children after their daily academic work was completed, these activities were generally skill-related and just more of the same type of word or math games found in their workbook assignments;

.....the curriculum in the classroom is almost totally set forth by the Denver Public Schools administration. Therefore, teachers trying to

keep up with just their assigned tasks made few attempts at innovative strategies;

.....the practice of publically displaying academic progress charts was quite common. Aquiescing to this traditional practice announced to all the deficiencies of non-English speaking children.

#### A Promising Direction: The Profile of the Effective Teacher

From the results revealed in Table II, the ratings of individual teachers on the Multicultural Classroom Checklist, comes the profile of the type of teacher who is effectively functioning with ethnically diverse pupils. In general terms this is a teacher who creates an atmosphere that school is a good place to be, an atmosphere of warmth and stimulation for active learning. This teacher individualizes the entire curriculum for each child, interacting some time during each day in positive and supportive manner with each child in the class. Reading groups are flexible. There are many alternatives to choose from for fulfilling the daily academic work. For example, children might learn the vowel sounds during their music time through singing the vowels.

Much praise and encouragement characterizes this teaching style. There is never any scolding, yelling, or deprecation of children. Children in this classroom are relaxed and unrestricted in their movements about the room.

The classroom reflects the ethnic heritage and background of all the children in this group. Newspaper clippings, and articles about Hmong, Vietnamese, Arabic or other ethnic groups are found on bulletin boards. Artifacts like weavings, sculptures, paintings, photographs, folk art adorn the tables, desks and borders of the room reflecting the varieties of heritages the children represent. The teacher refers to these aspects of the material culture of the children during the daily learning activities and

this material remains displayed throughout the school year -- not appearing briefly for special occasions only to be replaced by the symbols of solely the majority Anglo culture.

This model for the teacher of ethnically diverse children is deeply concerned about contacts with the families of the children. The teacher makes efforts to learn a few words of the languages the children speak, and to learn about the religious backgrounds, customs, traditions, holidays, festivals and practices of the children. Then this model teacher will incorporate this information into the daily learning experiences of the children.

The classrooms of these model teachers reveal a physical arrangement where children work together, face to face, in small or larger groups. The rooms are organized to allow many alternatives for children, easily accessible to the children themselves with minimum teacher supervision. Children are not stereotyped by either their ethnic or racial identity or by their academic ability. No progress charts publicly announce a child's ability or lack of it.

Finally, these teachers show their respect for the children they teach by involving them in planning for daily activities as well as special occasions. Children in these classrooms, from four-year-olds to eight-year-olds have responsibilities for setting out and putting away materials, organizing their free time activities, keeping the classroom tidy, greeting visitors, decorating the room and so on.

Table II on page 10 of this report indicates that of the thirty Denver Public School primary teachers observed in this study, at least seven displayed all or nearly all of these characteristics of the effective teacher of ethnically diverse children. Therefore, we urge that such teachers be

identified and made visible as models. Further, they should be brought together as a cadre of exemplary teachers to provide examples and encouragement to other teachers who now appear stymied and confounded by the sweeping changes in the composition of their classroom.

#### Some Constraints in Developing Promising Practices

The advice we offer above to develop a cadre of exemplary teachers of ethnically diverse children to demonstrate to other teachers techniques and strategies seems obvious and quite simple, but serious difficulties and constraints now operate in elementary schools to hinder the implementation of this promising practice. These constraints must somehow be overcome. Two specific problems are: 1) the willingness of teachers to be observed for a considerable length of time to identify their strengths and weaknesses and 2) the district wide system of grouping and programming. These two situations are discussed in detail as follows.

##### 1. The Willingness of Teachers to be Observed:

It is important to point out that this research into classrooms of ethnically diverse young children had the full support and approval of the Denver Public Schools' administration and teachers' participation in the study was voluntary. Yet, even though the researchers were relatively well-known to the teachers they were requesting to observe, a noticeable degree of reluctance was displayed by some teachers in allowing an observer in the classroom for two to three hours. For example, the researchers experienced cancellations for dates for the observations or excuses, such as "we are testing all A.M. or P.M." or "this is such a bad time of year to be observing," or "I don't know why you need a whole morning, isn't ten or fifteen minutes enough?" This resistance to being observed was

encountered even though some teachers had apparently decided to participate in the research when they received the written statement describing the study and the oral orientations provided by the researchers or their principal.

In one elementary school particularly, with a pool of ten eligible classrooms, grades Early Childhood through second, only four classrooms were observed because the teachers (after apparently deciding to participate) seemed to change their minds and refused to allow the researchers in their classrooms. When their principal was approached about this situation, the response was that "the teachers would not let me in their rooms either." This led the researchers to realize how tension-provoking a prolonged (two - three hours) observation of the classroom situation can be for some teachers.

## 2. Programmatic Organization and Grouping:

In many classrooms observed at first and second grade levels, and in kindergartens where reading or pre-reading skills were part of the curriculum, children were divided into reading level groups--usually three groups, slow, average, bright. In a few instances there were teachers who had organized flexible reading groupings. However, the Denver Public Schools curriculum calls for specific reading packages and specific strategies for teaching reading and language arts skills. Early Elementary teachers say they cannot teach language skills in any manner they choose. They do have some degree of choice however, within their building, in cooperation with the other grade level teachers, on the texts and workbooks and publishers' total packages to be used in that school.

In some schools this cooperation, particularly for teaching language arts skills, led to an organization where two, three or four teachers pooled

all their children (a total of seventy-to-ninety pupils) and divided them into "reading" groups based on ability. So, one teacher had all the NES children drawn from three separate classes of twenty-five or so children; another teacher might have all the advanced or "gifted" children for reading and the third teacher had the "average" readers. This type of organization then led to children changing rooms everyday, going back and forth through the halls to their "reading teacher" or to their "home base" teacher. Note: all schools in this study were buildings of the traditional style with self-contained classrooms. Problems arose for the researchers when they asked teachers involved in such curricular organization about "their" children -- especially the NES children. Some teachers would reply, "I really don't know anything about those Hmong children, they really belong in Mrs.

\_\_\_\_\_ 's class."

A condition that seemed to further alienate teachers from their NES children in several schools in this study, was the fact that the NES children were bussed into the school. Teachers remarked that they had little contact with parents and seemed to know very little about the children's family or past experiences in refugee camps or situations of their immigration to the United States.

Teachers in schools where the academic program was carried out by the classroom teacher who kept the children in a self-contained organization most of the day, seemed to be much more knowledgeable about each child's background and family--whether the children were NES or not.

#### Identification of Some Specific Promising Practices

Several classroom settings revealed to researchers uniquely creative and innovative techniques for teaching ethnically diverse children. These include:

1. At the Early Childhood Education (4-year-olds) and Kindergarten Levels (5-year-olds):

In the classrooms of several kindergarten and early childhood programs, teachers had utilized the classrooms' location in the school buildings and the special entrances into the classrooms that had been provided. When parents came to pick up their children, these teachers initiated conversations to make contact with the parents and promote parent involvement. Especially for parents of NES children, parents who were new arrivals to the United States, this strategy afforded an informal and comfortable access to the school, to their child's classroom, and to conversations with their child's teacher. Hence, these early childhood teachers had obtained in-depth knowledge of the NES children's families, and the families' concerns, their needs and their aspirations for their children as a result of these contacts.

2. At The First Grade Level (6-year-olds)

In the classroom of one First Grade teacher observed during the study, a unique system of "buddies" had been developed. The teacher had paired Anglo children with various Southeast Asian children -- Hmong, Vietnamese, and Cambodian, for reading and language arts activities, for math and for simple science experiences. The children communicated well, each pair contributing to the activity and the learning experience. The teacher had carefully worked on creating an atmosphere of mutuality, of interchange, and equal status for the partners so that the Anglo children did not dominate or feel superior to their non-Anglo "buddies." This buddy system appeared to be helping limited or non-English speaking children learn English more quickly and easily, as well.



3. At the Second Grade Level (7-year-olds):

Another promising practice for initial orientation of ethnically diverse children was developed by a Second Grade teacher. This was a series of slide-tape shows consisting of an introduction to the school building, its personnel and its facilities. The slide show had one "standard" set of slides with accompanying tapes in five different languages--the languages of the new ethnic groups now enrolling their children in this school. The slide-tape show helped to ease the entry to this multicultural school for both child and parent.

4. The Further Use of the Multicultural Classroom Checklist:

Finally, we urge the use of the Multicultural Classroom Checklist as an observation and rating instrument for all elementary school teachers and especially for teachers with ethnically diverse pupils. By using the Multicultural Classroom Checklist teachers themselves can gain insight into the strengths and weaknesses of their classroom organization, teaching techniques and strategies.

Teachers must recognize that today and for the future, they will be teaching children from widely varying ethnic, racial and social backgrounds--a far cry from those majority Anglo pupils found in most schools in recent past decades. Further, today's ethnically diverse school population differs greatly from the type of children teachers were originally trained to teach in the colleges of education they once attended.

In an article in the New York Times of August 23, 1981, describing the state of California as the melting pot of the 80's, Robert Lindsey states:

To a large extent, what is happening in California mirror a national trend. The 1980 census showed that in the 1970s the proportion of Americans classified as belonging to racial minorities--essentially, Blacks, Hispanic American, Asians, Pacific Islanders and American Indians--increased to 16.8 percent of the population from 12.5 percent.

In California, the census showed that Asians accounted for 5.3 percent of total population. The proportion has undoubtedly grown this year....because of the continuing influx of Indochinese refugees, who now total almost 200,000.....

As a group, they say, ethnic minorities have a significantly higher birth rate than the Anglo population, thus their proportion of the population, is likely to grow at a faster rate than that of whites.

In 1979, the last year for which figures are available, members of minority groups made up 40 percent of the students enrolled in the state's (California) schools.....

(R. Lindsey, 1981 p. 14)

#### A Concluding Remark

This report has closed with the detailing of some promising practices for working with ethnically diverse young children in the public school classroom. However, it seems appropriate to underscore the crucial nature of the classroom organization in itself ---- an organization that fosters individualizing, providing many alternatives, stimulating active learning approaches--as the most effective strategy for teaching ethnically diverse children and for teaching all children.

## REFERENCES

- Altbach, Philip and Kelley, Gail, Education and Colonialism. New York: Longman, 1978.
- Austin, Susan, "Cultural Dynamics of the Elementary School Classroom: An Ethnographic Approach." Unpublished oral Dissertation, Florida State University, 1976.
- Barth, Frederick (editor), Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. Boston: Little, Brown, 1969.
- Center for Applied Linguistics, A Handbook for Teachers of Vietnamese Students. Arlington, Va.: 1975.
- Crain, Robert L. et al, Making Desegregation Work. Cambridge: Ballinger. In press.
- Delamont, Sara and Hamilton, D. "Classroom Research: A Critique and New Approach" in M. Stubbs and S. Dealamont, editor. Explorations in Classroom Observations. London: Wiley and Sons, 1976.
- Delsohn, Gary. "Denver: A 'Minority' District?" Rocky Mountain News, Denver, May 12, 1981, p. 6.
- Denver Public Schools, Bilingual/Multicultural Education Center, Hal Anderson editor, Understanding Linguistically Different Students. A series of booklets on Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Mexico, Korea. Denver: 1978-79.
- Glasser, B G. and Straus, A.L., The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1967.
- Glazer, N. and Moynihan D. (editors), Ethnicity: Theory and Experience. Harvard University Press, 1975.
- Goodman, M.E. The Culture of Childhood, New York: Teachers College Press, 1970.
- Henry, Jules. Essays on Education. Middlesex: Penguin Books, Ltd. 1971.
- Jackson, Philip, Life in Classrooms. New York: Holt, 1969.
- King, Edith, Teaching Ethnic Awareness: Methods and Materials for the Elementary School. Goodyear Publishing Co., 1980.
- King, Ronald. All Things Bright and Beautiful: A Sociological Study of Infants' Classrooms. Chinchesters, : Wiley and Sons, 1978.
- Leacock, Eleanor, Teaching and Learning in City Schools. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Lindsey, Robert. "California Becoming a New Melting Pot." New York Times, August 23, 1981. p. 1 and 14.
- Ogbu, John. Minority Education and Caste. New York: Academic Press, 1978.

Piaget, Jean, The Child's Conception of the World. Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1951.

Rist, Ray, The Urban School: A Factory for Failure. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1976.

Singleton, John Nichu. A Japanese School. New York: Holt, 1967.

Spradley, J., The Ethnographic Interview. New York: Holt, 1979.

Van Arsdale, Peter, "Adaptions of Cambiano and Vietnamese to a Denver Neighborhood," in The Biocultural Basis of Health: Expanding Views of Medical Anthropology. Mosby, 1980.

ATTACHMENTS

Multicultural Classroom Checklist  
for  
Identifying Promising Practices in Ethnically Diverse Classrooms

Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

From A' (2) to use in classrooms:

- A. The Classroom Environment: 1. Draw a diagram of classroom arrangements: (Use reverse side of page for better details)

2. Bulletin boards and classroom decorations: Describe

Traditional displays.....multiethnic representations

1.....2.....3.....4.....

3. Workbooks, materials, texts, etc. levels, ethnic group represented  
Describe:

Materials and supplies accessible to children

no access.....accessible

1.....2.....3.....4.....

Multicultural Classroom Checklist continued.....

B. Social Interactions in Classroom:

4. Teacher's statements about children's performance generally:  
critical/~~de~~<sup>mm</sup>ing..... positive/praising;  
1.....2.....3.....4.!.  
Example: (if available)
5. Increases competition.....emphasizes cooperation  
1.....2.....3.....4.....  
Example:
6. Teacher's role in working with pupils: Provides information and expects response.....gives information and allows for questions, comments  
1.....2.....3.....4.....  
Example:
7. Teacher style in teaching i.e. moves around room or is stationary interactions between teacher and one child/between groups facilitator or authoritarian; include here use of aides, parents, older students, etc. observe if teacher works solely or as a leader. Examples or description:
8. General climate of classroom in group work:  
constructive, positive.....disorganized, undirected  
1.....2.....3.....4.....

Multicultural Classroom Checklist continued.....

C. Rules and Routines:

9. Enforcement of rules by teacher upon student/student groups  
consistent.....inconsistent

1.... 2.....3.....4.....

Comments:

10. Teacher effectiveness as rule enforcer, use of threats, use of physical control over modeling of positive vs. negative behavior (especially note group affiliation in this).

very effective.....ineffective

1.....2.....3.....4.....

Comments:

11. Opportunities for children after finish of assigned work:

many alternatives.....few alternatives

1.....2.....3.....4.....

Comments: (are aides or parents used here?)

12. Display of progress charts on children's work:

not visible.....visible

1.....2.....3.....4.....

Comments: types, names displayed, etc.

13. Children's involvement in classroom planning for curriculum of in responsibilities:

high involvement.....low involvement

1.....2.....3.... . ....4.....

Comments:

Multicultural Classroom Checklist continued.....

D. Cultural Continuity:

14. Teacher recognition of various home cultures of pupils by displays in classroom, discussion, references, child appearance comment, etc.  
non-recognition.....much recognition  
1.....2.....3.....4.....  
Comments and details: (also note deployment of ethnic aides, parents, olders, etc. here)

E. Innovative Strategies for Working with Ethnically Diverse Children -- in the classroom or in the school generally:

Describe and detail:



Project: Identifying Promising Practices in Ethnically Diverse Classrooms

E. King - Univ. of Denver

General Assessment of NES/LES Children's Achievement and Progress

This form is to secure information about the non-English speaking (NES/LES) children in your classroom. Please list the names of all NES/LES children in the column provided below and fill in the information requested to the best of your ability. (NES/LES children fall into Lau categories A and B.) List all children that were NES/LES at the time of entrance into your classroom.

Assessment terms such as: poor, improving, good, excellent, etc. are useful and provide an important measure of assessment when done by the child's teacher.

Teacher's Name \_\_\_\_\_

School \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

<u>Name of Child</u>	<u>Entrance Date</u>	<u>Ethnic Origin</u>	<u>Oral Lang. Progress</u>	<u>Reading Skills</u>	<u>Writing Skills</u>	<u>Emotional Behavior Stability</u>
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						
8.						
9.						
10.						
11.						
12.						

Interview with Teachers

Form for L.B.B. Project

Teacher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level \_\_\_\_\_ School \_\_\_\_\_  
Class Enrollment: \_\_\_\_\_ No. of NES/LES Children \_\_\_\_\_  
No. of Aides: \_\_\_\_\_ Different Languages Represented: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Suggested Questions for Interview:**

1. What can you tell me about the general makeup of this class?  
(transiency, socio-econ. level ethnic backgrounds?)
2. Do you work with parents: in what ways? -
3. At what specific level was your training or re-training?
4. What picture do you get of the home life of your various children?  
Are they bussed to you or walk in? Have you been to their homes?
5. Did you respond to Barry Beal's recent questionnaire on teachers' travel and resources as speakers of other languages? If so what did you reply, if not will you tell me briefly what other languages than English do you speak or understand? Where have you traveled? What resources might you have?
6. Do you enjoy contacts with peoples of other nations and cultures? such as "foreign foods? festivals of ethnic groups? etc.
7. Any other areas you wish to tell me about?